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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1555
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RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUYNAAAC/COMNAVFORJAPAN YOKOSUKA JA PRIORITY
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
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INFO RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA 3012
RUEHNH/AMCONSUL NAHA 5352
RUEHNAG/AMCONSUL NAGOYA 0777
RUEHKSO/AMCONSUL SAPPORO 3556
RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE 6804
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 8303
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RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 4328
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 4225
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SIPDIS

STATE FOR I/RF, PA/PR/FPC/W, IIP/G/EA, EAP/PD, R/MR,
EAP/J, EAP/P, PM;
USTR FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE;
TREASURY FOR OASIA/IMI;
SECDEF FOR OASD/PA;
CP BUTLER OKINAWA FOR AREA FIELD OFFICE;
PACOM HONOLULU FOR PUBLIC DIPLOMACY ADVISOR

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: TOKYO MEDIA REACTION - IRANIAN PRESIDENTIAL
ELECTION AND CHINESE HARASSMENT OF U.S. NAVY SHIP

11. LEAD STORIES: Top items on Wednesday morning included yesterday's press remarks by DPJ President Ozawa, in which he insisted that political donations by private companies, labor unions, and other entities should be completely prohibited.

12. "Khatami Makes Difficult Decision" On former Iranian President Khatami's decision not to run in the June presidential election, a Tehran-based reporter for the liberal Asahi wrote (3/18): "Khatami dropped out of the race reasoning that it is in the best interest of his country that the votes not be split among reformist candidates. Given that the U.S. and the Europeans had high expectations that a President Khatami would promote reconciliation with them while pushing democratization at home, his official candidacy could have triggered strong reaction from conservative forces. Khatami made a tough decision to quit in order to head off domestic instability. Prospects for democratization in Iran appear to have become bleak."

13. "Fierce Tug of War in the Sea" On the recent harassment of a U.S. Navy research vessel by a Chinese warship in the South China Sea, the conservative Sankei's correspondent stated (3/18): "The incident evidenced that a fierce, behind-the-scene tug of war is still ongoing between the U.S. and China despite much-touted enhanced bilateral coordination under the Obama administration.... The South China Sea is a critical sea lane for Japan because of its heavy dependence on oil from the Middle East. Japan should be braced that China eventually constructs and operates an aircraft carrier in the area."

